



The Florida House of Representatives

Chris Sprowls
Speaker

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Jan. 6, 2021

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Florida House Fights to Protect Florida Businesses from Frivolous COVID-19 Lawsuits

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (*Jan. 6, 2021*) — Today, Florida House Speaker Chris Sprowls pledged strong support for and fast-tracked legislation filed today to protect Florida businesses and nonprofits from frivolous COVID-19 lawsuits.

“Florida businesses and organizations that do the right thing should not fear being drowned by massive litigation costs,” said House Speaker Chris Sprowls. “We are fast-tracking this COVID-19 liability protection bill to ensure that there is no potential for unscrupulous litigation to threaten Florida’s economic recovery. Ours is the most aggressive liability protection bill in the nation.”

Florida Representative Lawrence McClure, a businessman from Hillsborough County, filed HB 7 today. It offers general liability protection for Florida businesses, schools, nonprofits and religious institutions making a good-faith effort to follow established federal, state and local guidelines. HB 7’s liability protections apply retroactively to any newly filed lawsuit.

“A small-restaurant owner shouldn’t have to worry about making payroll because a predatory actor seized on an opportunity to sue and settle,” said Representative McClure. “HB 7 does what 21 other states across the country have done already, and it does it better.”

On the first day of the House’s first interim committee meeting week, the Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee will take up HB 7 for a vote during its 4 p.m. meeting on Jan. 13 in Webster Hall (212 Knott) at the Florida Capitol.

While HB 7 focuses on businesses and nonprofits, the Florida House will separately address COVID liability protections for health care providers and facilities, including nursing homes and long-term care facilities, in the Health & Human Services Committee silo.

“Florida’s health care providers have other considerations and risks that deserve greater discussion and evaluation,” said Speaker Sprowls. “We owe it to them and the vulnerable populations they serve to be heard before we address their concerns with another bill.

“We appreciate President Simpson’s partnership on this important legislation and look forward to working with the Senate on it, as well. I’ve asked Chair Colleen Burton of the Health and Human Services committee to engage in dialogue next week about protections for health care providers.”

A workshop be held next week to explore liability coverage in health care during the Health & Human Services Committee meeting on Jan. 14 at 9 a.m. That meeting will be available for live viewing at www.TheFloridaChannel.org.

Regarding HB 7, Justice Committee Chair Daniel Perez and Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee Chair Wyman Duggan offered the following remarks:

“Florida’s small business owners and nonprofits should know they have a champion in their Florida House. HB 7 shields our hard-working Florida business owners who follow protocols and guidelines to keep people safe. They shouldn’t have to worry about a costly lawsuit that could drain their funds and put them out of business forever,” Perez said.

“This is important legislation not just for Florida businesses but all of Floridians, to keep Florida’s economy moving. Florida’s small business is the engine that drives Florida’s economy. We cannot afford to allow it to stall over uncertainty regarding potential liability,” Duggan said.

In addition, today Senator Jeff Brandes filed an identical Senate Bill. The Florida Legislative Session begins March 2, 2021.

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